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Identical letters dated 22 May 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I write further to the numerous letters we have addressed to you on the subject of the reform measures that have been taken by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic since the current crisis began in Syria, which have brought real and perceptible change in the situation that cannot be ignored by any objective observer. Those reforms culminated in the holding in Syria on 7 May 2012 of multi-party parliamentary elections, in an atmosphere of transparency, impartiality and freedom. With respect to those elections, I should like to bring to your attention the following:

1. While the history of the Syrian People's Council or Parliament goes back to the early twentieth century, the recent elections had a particular significance that made them unique. They were held in accordance with the new Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, which was approved by a plebiscite held on 28 February 2012. That Constitution guarantees that the modern democratic Syrian State will be governed by the rule of law and its citizens, and that all citizens will be equal. There will be political plurality, general rights will be protected, and authority will be democratically exercised through the ballot box. The Constitution includes fundamental amendments, including the removal of article 8 of the earlier Constitution, that referred to the role of the Ba'ath party in the State and society. It also included important articles that took into consideration the reforms that have been undertaken in the field of human rights, and the numerous international commitments that Syria has honoured as part of the United Nations human rights framework.

2. The recent parliamentary elections in Syria, of which the results were announced on 15 May 2012, were held in accordance with a new electoral law that adopted the highest international standards. All sectors of society were guaranteed equal rights of representation, and transparency and impartiality were strictly observed, as was the right of every individual to freedom of opinion, expression, assembly and membership of a party, pursuant to the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and numerous relevant Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions, all of which are instruments that Syria has approved and undertaken to implement. Those elections were also conducted in accordance with the new Law on General Elections, No. 101 of 2011, which placed the electoral process under the complete supervision of the judiciary and provided that elections should be transparent and fair. Further guidance was provided by the new Law on Political Parties, No. 100 of 2011, which formulated the legislative and legal bases that govern political life and multi-party politics in Syria and relies on new and contemporary precepts with respect to the establishment of political parties and participation in the democratic process. More than 18 political parties were authorized to participate in the elections, whereas in previous parliamentary elections, only nine were involved. Recently, with a view to completing reform of the electoral process in Syria, the Supreme Constitutional Court was established.

3. A total of 5,186,957 Syrian citizens took part in the elections, representing 51.26 per cent of the electorate. Their votes were cast in secret and in an atmosphere of transparency and complete freedom, in 15 electoral districts spread throughout the country.

4. There are 250 members of the new parliament, 30 of whom are women. That testifies to the prominent position occupied by Syrian women in the political process and the economic, cultural and social spheres, albeit the elections were held in circumstances that are unprecedented in Syria. Here, we should like to point out that the Government of Syria continues to exert urgent efforts to increase the role of women in various fields.

5. Several candidates and their agents objected to the electoral process being conducted in a number of centres that did not comply with the new electoral law. Consequently, it was necessary to hold new elections in 18 centres, which meant that the results could not be declared on the date expected. That clearly shows that the electoral process was conducted in accordance with the principles of freedom, democracy, transparency and fairness.

6. Albeit the elections were held in accordance with a new set of laws that had been promulgated in response to the demands of the people, which were met with comprehensive political, economic and social reforms and the strengthening of human rights and general freedoms, certain persons did not want that process to succeed and made every effort to undermine the comprehensive reform programme by propagating extremist and Salafist ideas in Syrian society, which is pluralist, and by supporting terrorism, bearing arms with a view to killing, abducting and torturing Syrian citizens, destroying property and perpetrating all kinds of human rights violations. Here, we refer to the fact that some armed terrorist groups tried to obstruct the electoral process in some areas, by threatening and terrorizing citizens in an attempt to prevent them from taking part in the elections. At the same time, certain foreign parties that support and finance those terrorist groups took it upon themselves to run media interference through a misleading campaign on developments in the electoral process and the fabrication of misinformation, and by systematically urging that the outcome of the elections should be rejected, even before the elections were held. Nevertheless, the Syrian people rejected all that intimidation, misinformation and incitement, and responded to the voice of reform, deciding to boldly embark on the new democratic process. Given the current situation in Syria, the voter turnout was excellent.

7. The Syrian Government was determined to continue with the comprehensive reform process and, in particular, to hold the parliamentary elections on the date that had been decided, regardless of the difficult circumstances that are being experienced. That is because of its belief that the future of Syria will be fashioned by the Syrians themselves, who are the only ones capable of determining what features should characterize that future, through their participation in the reform process, which includes the choice of their representatives in the Syrian People's Council or Parliament. Notwithstanding all the outcomes, stumbling blocks and obstacles that beset the recent Syrian parliamentary elections, it remains a singular experience from which many useful lessons can be learned, and an important first step that must be built upon in following the path to reform and in any further future steps.

8. The Syrian Arab Republic wished to share this information with you in order to put you in the picture with regard to the latest developments that are taking place with regard to the democratic reform process that is being carried out by Syria despite the huge difficulties it faces because of the terrorism and violence that is being perpetrated by the armed terrorist groups, the imposition on the Syrian people of unjust unilateral sanctions, and an unprecedented media campaign of incitement and misinformation. Certain media are even supporting armed groups, taking it upon themselves to spread lies and promote violence, terrorism and the assassination of several Syrian officials. That simple example indicates the hypothetical picture that those media are attempting to paint of Syria with the support, guidance and funding of States that have become well known for their enmity towards Syria.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as an official document of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 83, and of the Security Council.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic
to the United Nations